

Making Books – and Chili by David Esslemont
The 2012 Victor and Carolyn Hammer Book Arts Lecture
King Library, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.
Wednesday, November 28, 2012

Thank you. Good evening. How are you? What a great place. There is much here that is relevant to what I want to talk about – besides my breakfast and lunch . . . where we are eating tonight?

An extraordinary wealth of human creativity is to be found at the University of Kentucky. In the King Library, the variety of books, the range of subjects is awe-inspiring. But don't forget what Charles Dickens said: "There are books of which the backs and covers are by far the best parts." There is a teaching press, with iron and wooden presses. Isn't it astonishing to think these presses were once used to print books? I make books. I have an interest in books. You have an interest in books. Actually, I find everybody has an interest in books of some sort. I have an interest in food too – everybody has an interest in food.



1 Lindisfarne

I have a particular interest in how books are made – in the creative process – and how original works are shaped by a response to many different things: our heritage and traditions, current events, trends, tastes, technology, the global economy and the environment. The Lindisfarne Gospels was made 1300 years ago, [700 AD] on a small island off the coast of Northumberland, in northeast England. In the tenth century someone added an Anglo-Saxon gloss to the Latin text, producing the earliest surviving Old English copies of the Gospels. It is a beautiful book and it has special significance because it represents the heritage that shapes my work: it was made in Northumberland; it has Anglo Saxon elements and it is illustrated in what's known as an insular style containing a fusion of Celtic, Germanic and Roman elements. You can view the entire manuscript online on the British Library's website. Remarkable. Did the Vikings make chili? I don't know. I am not sure what spices they had in the Norse land. What led me to make chili? – We'll see. I know I heard of Tabasco long before I tasted the sauce. I like to tell a story by the Scottish poet Ivor Cutler called 'The Soup Tureen', in which the question is asked, 'Do you know what Tabasco sauce can do for your feet?' But I digress.

Apparently our brains are not divided into compartments. They handle sensory data from many sources and are interactive. Who argued that knowledge is not the same as perception? – Hearing a language does not mean you can understand it, (even if you have taken lessons). I learned Welsh as an adult – I thought every dog in Wales was called Tydyma – but tydyma means "come here". One afternoon at the Gregynog Press a visitor was having a conversation in Welsh with my colleague. It was tea time and pouring a cup I asked him, *Dych eisau paned?* (Do you want a cup [of tea]?) He said something that I

took to mean no, so I sat down and drank the tea myself. Behind our visitor, my colleague's jaw dropped – and he hastily poured another cup. Later, I discovered his reply roughly translated was: “By God yes! I am absolutely parched, I could murder a cup of tea!” “A little learning is a dangerous thing”



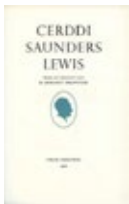
2 Gregynog

In 1984, I went to Gregynog for a conference on printing history. This mock-Tudor mansion – the black and white strap work is all concrete rendering and is one of the earliest examples of a concrete clad building still in existence – stands in 750 acres of parkland, surrounded by the rolling hills of Montgomeryshire in mid Wales. It was once the home of the sisters Gwendoline and Margaret Davies who in 1923 founded the Gregynog press. The Press closed in 1940 and re-opened in 1978 as limited company owned by the University of Wales with the name Gwasg Gregynog (Gwasg is Welsh for Press - take care to pronounce the final ‘g’ or you refer to a slave or a servant!). Another reason for going to Gregynog was the opportunity to visit the Press and I crossed the portals as if entering the Sistine Chapel. There were the familiar aromas of ink, solvents and machine oil and an atmosphere redolent with creativity.

The following year, I became Controller or Printer/Director of the Press.

3 Saunders Lewis

Moving to Wales from Newcastle upon Tyne was a move to another country. I had no idea Welsh was spoken by nearly twenty percent of the population, or the road signs would be bilingual, or how I was going to design and print books in a foreign language. Cerddi Saunders Lewis is a collection of poems by Saunders Lewis, a highly regarded poet, playwright and fervent Welsh Nationalist. The only Welsh I knew at that time was ‘Rydyw’n hoffi coffi’ (I like coffee). What a marvelous opportunity for creative typography. I could arrange the words, lines and blocks of type on the page to make the most satisfying design. With Saunders Lewis turning in his grave, it was not long before the editor, and others, very gently made me aware that these words did mean something. On no account was I to take typographical liberties with the Welsh language.



4 Mountains of Wales opening

The Mountains of Wales had been in preparation for some. This anthology of prose and verse in Welsh spans ten centuries and was a valuable introduction to both the language and literature of Wales. Coincidentally, John Ryder had been asked to design the book, and so we began working together. His ability to give precise instructions for the layout of pages was astonishing. He could clearly visualize the printed page and possessed a remarkable awareness and sensitivity to the space around words and paragraphs. The work of a book designer is like that of a chef or an architect: they both orchestrate many different elements. John Ryder found an interesting analogy in



an architectural review by Fiona MacCarthy: 'The Italians,' she wrote, 'knew by instinct what we are slowly grasping, that the meaning of the city is not so much a matter of the buildings as the spaces in between.' His comment was: 'This is exactly how typography works.' I would add the same applies in the visual arts as well as in music, where silence and intervals are essential tools.

I would visit him in his small apartment. Lunch was always waiting: white wine, smoked salmon, whole meal bread, fresh lemon and lettuce, followed by some French Brie. We ate at the kitchen table together with his wife who would eat a rather different lunch: a bowl of cornflakes. Afterwards we retired to his inner sanctum: a room full of reference books, press books, bundles of page proofs, correspondence and drafts of texts for books he was writing. I learned a great deal from John Ryder about typography and book design, legibility, readability and visual editing. I will never again design a contents page with page numbers ranged right and the text ranged left.



5 Wrenching Times title spread

Wrenching Times is a collection of poems from *Drum-taps* by Walt Whitman illustrated with wood engravings by Gaylord Schanilec. I first met Gaylord in New York at a Book Arts conference and invited him to come to Wales and illustrate the Whitman volume. He responded with a slow, drawn-out, 'gee, I don't know'. But the next day he agreed to have a look at the text – apparently he told someone about my invitation who'd said, 'Gregynog asked you to illustrate a book, and you said no – are you crazy?' Gaylord was resident at Gregynog for six months during which time he made his colour wood engravings for the book. The creative atmosphere that must have existed at the Press in the 1930s was rekindled.

I felt Gwasg Gregynog should do more than just print and publish books, I established internships – work experience for students of all ages and dreamt the press could be at the heart of something like an international center for the book arts. It became clear the University did not share my vision, and in 1997 I left Gregynog to return to the precarious occupation of freelance designer, printer, bookbinder and publisher. In twelve years I learned a great deal about printing, book design and publishing, and about business management.



6 DE outside central school | Blair Hughes-Stanton

How did I end up in this precarious occupation to begin with? Well, I studied Fine Art, painting, at the Central School of Art and Design in London where Blair Hughes-Stanton taught me lino cutting and wood engraving. Founded in 1896 The Central School was an outcome of the arts and crafts movement of which William Morris, William Lethaby and Emery Walker were key figures. Morris the artist, writer, socialist and founder of the Kelmscott Press, Lethaby the architect and the printer, process engraver and advisor to several presses, Emery Walker] The scholar printer J H Mason, formerly compositor at T J

Cobden-Sanderson's Doves press became head of a school of book production. Noel Rooke taught wood engraving and book illustration, at one time there weren't many English wood engravers who weren't either students or students of students of Noel Rooke. Edward Johnston, described as the father of modern calligraphy taught at the Central School. Eric Gill was one of his students. Douglas Cockerell author of *Bookbinding and the care of books*, taught bookbinding. It transpires that a whole raft of key figures had been involved with the school of book production. By the time I was a student it no longer existed.



7 DE linocut

Hughes-Stanton wore yellow corduroy trousers, old misshapen shoes, a rust-red sweater, a yellow-ochre open-necked shirt, an old, stained, leather waistcoat and a short tweed overcoat. He carried with him a yellow-leather carryall that contained his pajamas and a bottle of whisky. The lessons I learned from day one were paramount. Lino was no longer a cold, rough slab that was printed with ink resembling custard, but a medium of enormous potential capable of the finest subtleties. After a year I was allowed to have a go at wood engraving and even helped cut and proof some the artist's own lino blocks. Hughes Stanton showed us a few of the books he had illustrated with wood engravings in the 1930s. Among them were some printed at the Gregynog Press.



8 Lamentations chapter 1 | Epithalamion engraving

The most remarkable are *The Revelation of Saint John the Divine*, and *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*. Both are tall slim volumes full of astonishing wood engravings accompanying a handsome setting of a short text. Hughes-Stanton's extraordinary vision upset some people, breaking away as it did from traditional Christian iconography. One reviewer said 'there is in the wild sanity of this astounding book [Revelation] something very close to the texture of Mr Stanton's own mind'. His engraved initial letters were based on the fifteenth century letter forms of Damianus Moyllus. After three tempestuous years at Gregynog Hughes-Stanton left and set up the Gemini Press. He later gave me all his type most of which was 24pt Blado italic. Coincidentally, I received an email just yesterday afternoon announcing that the Columbian press he once used is currently on the market for \$9600.

He asked me to help him print some of his wood engravings at his home in Manningtree. Here the lessons continued, but not formally – I learned how to mix copperplate oil with ink, how to roll out a consistent, even film of ink with a hand roller, how to balance the weight of the roller when inking the blocks, how much ink to apply, how to choose the best paper, the intricacies of make-ready, and how to gauge the necessary pressure need to get the best print with the least amount of ink. He seemed recalcitrant, but looking back it was my lack of knowledge, I didn't know what there was to know. When I asked him what he remembered about Gregynog all he said was 'three years of bloody rain!' and of the Davies Sisters: 'oh they didn't know

anything about printing and never came in the Press'. But he did show me books, and how to print, and for that I am ever grateful. How a man in his seventies could ever pull a hand press handle like he did, I don't know: 'Get your leg up on the rails', he would say, 'grip the handle, swing back and drop your bottom at the same time.' There were lessons in living too, especially eating and drinking. His wife Anne was a formidable cook: I tried sheep's brains first in Manningtree, coffee from French bowls, Angostura bitters, and I learned the addictive rhythms of cribbage.



9 Cecil Collins

Among my other tutors at the Central school were, the symbolist painter Cecil Collins [1908–89], and the artist Hans Tisdall. Cecil Collins cut a peculiar figure, he always wore a coat that looked more like a cape, and a trilby hat from under which peered his bird-like face. He was an idiosyncratic teacher – in his drawing classes you were likely to find yourself sitting on the floor in the dark listening to a recording of waves breaking on a beach. On one occasion he raised his spectacles to look closely at a print of mine . . . expecting some profound constructive remark . . . all he said was: “Mmm, its a good black. You’ve got a flair for woodcuts”. In light of that comment you will not be surprised to learn my latest book is a collection of woodcuts. This detail is from the portrait: “Cecil Collins at the Central School”, painted by a fellow student, Rosalind Cuthbert.



10 Hans Tisdall – Hemingway jacket

Hans Tisdall [1910-1997] came in one day a week. He spoke with a German accent, and like Collins he cut a striking figure. He always wore a black velvet suit, with a pink cravat, and his remaining white hair was swept forward over an otherwise bald head. He carried a cane and walked with something of a limp – one of his legs seemed to bend further back than normal, – I imagined the result of his being shot down while flying with the Luftwaffe over Britain during the Second World War. Once he said to me: “Esslemont, I like zee nuances of colour in your painting”. I had no idea this artist was a master of colour. Nor did I know he was a lettering artist whose distinctive script has adorned many a book jacket. Much of this work was for the London publisher Jonathan Cape. Ernest Hemingway insisted that [all] his English editions carried Tisdall jackets. Of Course these three characters, Hughes-Stanton, Collins and Tisdall were not my only teachers at the Central School, but they are the ones whose lessons still resonate today. How fortunate I was to have met such interesting, talented and gifted artists.

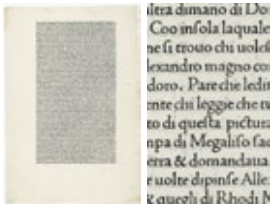


11 Michelangelo – David | Poster

After college I embarked on a comprehensive “artists’ tour” of Italy, traveling from Venice to Ravenna through Tuscany and Umbria to Rome and down to Naples and back again. I saw firsthand many famous paintings, frescoes, sculptures, churches, gardens, palaces and ruins. Most I knew from illustrations in books but I was still taken aback by the difference in scale between the reproductions and the

original works. Italy is where I believe I learned to eat . . . and where I first discovered the importance and potential of three simple ingredients: tomato, garlic and olive oil.

With Hughes-Stanton's gift of type I started my "letterpress apprenticeship": printing a wide range of ephemera, mixing the Blado italic freely with a wide range of other typefaces.



12 Pliny natural history - page | detail

I learned about the fifteenth and sixteenth century pioneers of European printing and encountered first-hand the works of: Gutenberg, Aldus Manutius, Antonio Blado, Ludovico Arrighi and Nicolas Jenson, the French printer, whose 1476 edition of Pliny's Natural History, printed in Venice, is quite simply, an inspiration. All of these people have typefaces named after them and the types they used or created have been models for many other fonts still in widespread use. For example, William Morris's Golden Type was based on Jenson's types, as was the Doves type made for Cobden-Sanderson. Bembo was based on a type used by Aldus Manutius.



13 Bewick portrait | golden eagle

William Wordsworth wrote in the 1805 edition of Lyrical ballads:

O now that the genius of Bewick were mine,
And the skill which he learned on the banks of the Tyne!
Then the Muses might deal with me just as they chose,
For I'd take my last leave both of verse and of prose.
What feats would I work with my magical hand!
Book learning and books would be banished the land.

1978 marked the sesquicentennial anniversary [the 150th] of the death of the wood engraver Thomas Bewick. I discovered that over 700 of his original wood blocks were kept in Newcastle City library together with an unparalleled collection of his illustrated books. Here was an opportunity to print a commemoration. In short, the librarian agreed to let me print from Bewick's original blocks and the idea evolved into my first book. The debt I owe librarians, especially of special collections is huge and I must say how grateful I am to those who have allowed me to spend so much time in a strong room or to browse the reserved stacks.



14 Bewick tailpiece

Thomas Bewick compiled two major works: *A General History of Quadrupeds* [1790] and a two-volume *History of British Birds* [1797-1804]. Besides the exquisite engravings of animals and birds there are many tailpiece vignettes. These combine his remarkable eye for detail with a narrative, which is usually foreboding and sometimes scatological. They are remarkable records of life in rural England at the end of the eighteenth century. Of course I would need a press and I found a large Columbian, the most decorative of all the iron hand presses. I assembled the necessary trinkets described by Joseph Moxon in

his fifteenth century treatise and I set to work. Bewick's first blocks were engraved when wooden common presses were still in use. [It's not that long ago] He was unhappy with the way the ink was being squashed off the finer lines so he lowered the surface of the blocks in those areas where he wanted pale tones, such as on the breast and head of a bird. Now, to get the best impression from such engravings they have to be printed on dampened paper. A linen blanket in the tympan packing helps to mold the paper over the blocks.

My plan was to print half the edition and have it bound. However the cost of leather binding was so prohibitive I decided to do it myself. With the help of my then mother-in-law, who was experienced in binding, in two weeks I had twenty copies to sell and enough confidence to continue binding the rest on my own. I had found my *métier*. And I pursued printing and binding with considerable zest.



15 John Bewick binding | Clennell binding

There is something magical about Gold tooling, isn't there? For this red goatskin binding on my *John Bewick* book I engraved brass tools based on a detail from one of the engravings. The other book is *Luke Clennell: Bewick apprentice*. Someone told me they thought the binding had Celtic undertones. Actually it was inspired by one of the bindings on a book from Gioavanni Mardersteig's Officina Bodoni. I showed my books to other printers, bookbinders, and book designers such as: Vivian Ridler, then printer to the University of Oxford, Sandy Cockerell, and Roger Powell, perhaps best known for having rebound another great illuminated manuscript, *The Book of Kells*. The moment I entered Powell's workshop, he challenged me to find the difference between two apparently identical books. The grain direction of the paper in one copy was running the wrong way. Roger Powell's lesson remains with me to day as a reminder of a fundamental requirement of book design if you're using machine-made paper.

Grain direction demonstration

Let us take a break as I demonstrate how you can identify the grain direction of paper.

I once did two bindings for presentation to Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. It was on the occasion of his opening a sewage treatment works. Enquiring about the colour of leather to use – thinking it would be scarlet, purple or royal blue – I was told the Palace wanted what might be politely described as nut brown! The Prince is well known for his mischievous sense of humor, I wonder. But the point of my story is this: The two volumes were Ian Bain's *Watercolours and Drawings of Thomas Bewick*. The grain direction of the paper in one of the volumes was wrong, and, it was a different colour. Iain Bain, a gentle Scotsman, commented 'Ach, the papermaker must have got some of his porridge mixed up in the pulp.' It makes a difference.



16 Kelmscott Chaucer

To paraphrase Emery Walker's opening remarks in his famous lecture of 1888: I suppose it not unreasonable to think that everyone here has at least some idea of the history of fine books So let me be pardoned for outlining the opening scenes of the fine press tradition in nineteenth century England. Walker's lecture about letterpress printing and illustration led William Morris to establish the Kelmscott Press in 1891. He later wrote of his aims: "I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, . . . or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters". Which is curious. Because, looking at this opening from the Kelmscott Chaucer, I confess my eye is a little dazzled. One distinguished designer has gone so far as declaring these pages as "choked with black bile!

Cobden Sanderson was a contemporary of Morris, he bound some Kelmscott books, and they were neighbours. In 1900 he founded the Doves Press. The books from these two presses are like chalk and cheese. In his lecture "The Book Beautiful Cobden-Sanderson wrote: "The whole duty of Typography as of Calligraphy is to communicate to the imagination without loss by the way the thought or image intended to be communicated by the Author." – Two diametrically opposed examples of the book beautiful.



17 post gregynog books

So there we have it – how I came to be involved with books – but what have I done since leaving Gregynog?. Well, I've worked as a typographical designer, built several websites and two workshops. I've written a couple of books, printed fifteen, three of them on commission, started farming, learned what it is like to be a peasant, and learned how to cook. Web design takes considerable time and it is increasingly difficult to keep pace with the rapid advances in technology. However, I think the effort is worthwhile and the applications now available offer no end of possibilities. This snapshot of my Books page shows thumbnail images of most of the books that I have worked on over the last fifteen years.



18 DG Special binding

But, one must not forget to strike a balance between thinking, promoting and productivity. *The Wood Engravings of David Gentleman* was a resounding success and provided the means to build a new workshop as well as the confidence to continue as an independent fine press. Seen here in my special binding, the white alum-tawed goatskin which is not only very durable becomes a canvas for my designs created with stencils, acrylic ink, brushes and toothbrushes.

My list of ideas for books is long, and is constantly growing like Jack's legendary beanstalk! Often I will be working on several projects once all at different stages of gestation. I first sketched the outline for a

book about making and publishing books on a flight from Philadelphia to Minneapolis. Looking at this book now it is astonishing to consider the advances in digital technology over the past twelve years. In particular the evolution of the e-book. I needed a text to use for my specimen pages and decided to write a novel, which became the Missing pages. My aim was to inspire people to make books, like chef Gousteau whose motto was “ Anyone can cook”; I believe “anyone can make a book”. However, I failed – producing a limited edition hand-bound book that was itself too slick and too pricey for most students! I’m now working on a revised e-book edition and am pleased to offer the remaining unbound sheets at a very reasonable rate.



19 Ink on the Elbow

Several years after the Gregynog Whitman, Gaylord Schanilec and I began to look for another project on which we might collaborate. I made regular visits to his home in Wisconsin and became increasingly taken by life in the Midwest and the vastness of North America. The outcome was *Ink on the Elbow* - a finely printed edition of our e-mail correspondence! Covering a period of four years the conversations are concerned primarily with the making of books. Our exchange of emails during the summer of 2002 for example, when we were both simultaneously working on books, reveal the anxiety and strife associated with this particular creative activity. We encountered some disdain as well as success for this audacious piece of self-aggrandizement.

The publication of *Ink on the Elbow* marked a turning point and I began to spend increasing amounts of time in America. Now, to quote another native of Newcastle, the rock star Sting: “I’m a legal alien”. Not living in New York but in rural Iowa. Do you know England alone covers only 50,000 square miles but has a population of 53 million? It would fit comfortably inside Iowa with 55,000 sq miles. But, Iowa’s population is only 3 million! There is room to breath and explains why cars, refrigerators – everything in Britain is smaller than in America.



20 Prelude special binding

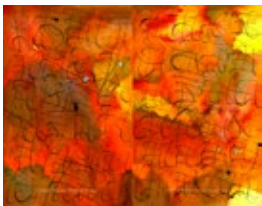
During this transition period, I worked as a book designer for the British Library and began work on a new edition of the autobiography of the distinguished watchmaker and British National Treasure, George Daniels. I was an artist in Residence with the Wordsworth Trust at Grasmere in the English Lake District. The then Director of the Wordsworth Trust, Robert Woof was a man of broad vision and knowledge. His philanthropy and his ability to draw together kindred spirits such as scholars, artists, writers and poets, created a vigorous melting pot a stone’s throw from Dove Cottage where Wordsworth had once lived. For the first time in years I felt proud and was indeed encouraged to call myself, first and foremost, “an artist”.

At Grasmere I made many watercolour paintings and drawings, studies for a new illustrated edition of Wordsworth’s autobiographical epic, *The Prelude*. Printed in Minneapolis, I offered ten copies in this special binding. The white alum-tawed goatskin was again my canvas so to speak, except here the image is actually an inkjet print.



21 Daniels binding

George Daniels' *All in Good Time* is a true rags to riches story, the Daniels children had to stand up to eat meals because there were not enough chairs. Daniels first learns how to repair watches, then cars and by sheer determination, coupled with innate talent he makes his fortune from handmade-watches and from restoring vintage cars such as Rolls Royces and racing Bentleys. He is honored by the Queen and a University and sells the patent for his coaxial escapement to Omega. The commission to design, print and bind twenty-seven copies of this book came out of the blue. My client had the idea because we both did everything. Under the glass watch glass is a wheel made by Daniels. This book and the *Prelude* were both printed from photopolymer plates on a Heidelberg cylinder press. They are substantial books, between them, over five hundred pages,



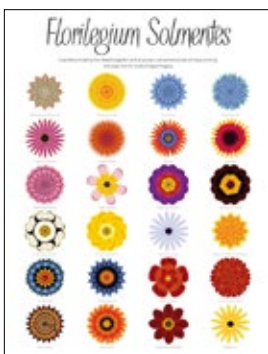
22 To Autumn – And still more, later flowers for the bees, | Until they think warm days will never cease.

Having moved to Iowa, but with the Heidelberg still in Minneapolis, my next book would be different. The fall colours in Minnesota and Wisconsin can be spectacular. In fact fall colours throughout America can be spectacular can't they? I took a photograph looking up through the brilliant oranges, reds and yellows, to a blue sky and thought, "there's a book here". With the English Romantic poets in mind Keats' poem 'To Autumn' with its memorable first line, "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" was the obvious choice for a text. Each page is a painted detail from the photograph over which I've written or drawn one line from the poem. For the book, which is printed digitally, I added the line as text reversed out in white. – After all you need to be able to read poem. The paintings or drawings, perhaps "calligrams", were created as facing pages.



23 To Autumn mural

Seen all together, the bigger picture is revealed in a fractured montage nine feet high. The following year I found inspiration in Barack Obama's Inaugural address as the newly elected President of the United States. This for me was a significant event and for once I felt proud to be an Englishman living in America. Discovering hidden textual references and allusions to the English I was inspired to print the speech in its entirety together with word clouds, drawn in the manner I used for Keats. It now seems I shall have the opportunity to make a sequel, perhaps drawn with my left hand, we'll see.



24 Florilegium

One of the books I did for the British Library was Roderick Cave's book, *Impressions of Nature*. It is a comprehensive history of nature printing and inspired me to get out my ink rollers and do more print-making. Achieving clean, crisp impressions from leaves is really quite difficult. And besides, I wanted to create larger multiple images and found the answer by scanning my impressions and creating digital montages. This project blossomed (so to speak) and I ended up with a monstrous portfolio of digital flowers, which I called the Florilegium

Solmentes. Too big to transport easily and not really finding much enthusiasm from either Librarians (few call it a book) or print collectors (many of whom still have an irrational dislike of “digital” prints). I moved on: a synesthetic transposition of the clarinet solo “In Freundchaft” by Karl Stockhausen. Then an illustrated *Sartor Resartus*, Thomas Carlyle’s fascinating tale of Herr Teufeldroch.

There are many brilliant bookmakers and printers working in America. In March this year I was honored to have young Russell Maret visit and to see first hand his most recent exquisite book, *Specimens*. It is absolutely incredible. Russell and I share a passion for books and printing – and for food and cooking. Although he does not consider himself a food snob he is a gourmand, and I worried about what to give him to eat. I settled on handmade pizza baked in my homemade wood-fired clay oven and served him some prize-winning chili topped with a free-range freshly-laid organic egg for breakfast.

Analogies can be dangerous. But let me suggest we might draw comparisons between the work of a chef and that of the book designer/printer. Both are designing and producing – orchestrating – arranging contrasting and complimentary elements, and they prepare multiples. Aren’t they both passionate with the quality of materials or ingredients? For some time now, I have been looking for a food-related subject that I could make into an interesting book. The day after Russell Maret left I knew what my next book would be.

We have seen that a little insight goes a long way, and how opportunities can arise in the most unexpected way. What we do today may well be a continuation of earlier work, and why not. Garrison Keillor agrees, he once told me “I’ve been writing about the same town in Minnesota for over thirty years” (Lake Wobegon). Our heritage and traditions help shape the work we create. But occasionally something happens, let us call it the Aha moment – a “eureka” moment, there is a catalyst, that leads us – inspires us – to ‘think outside the box’ and create something extraordinary. As I look around today at the burgeoning book arts scene I wonder, why? The book arts student must study all aspects of the history of books and printing; they must practice again, and again and again, and they must seek firsthand knowledge from experts.

Let me suggest that if you combine choice ingredients together with some “fresh, clear, well-seasoned perspective”, a little hindsight, and a dash of insight, you will make some exceptional books – and perhaps some fabulous chili.

Thank you.

Roll video – Chili: a pictorial recipe